

New Brunswick

Some N.B. truckers join Ottawa-bound protest, but not with trucking group's blessing

Short traffic disruption caused near Fredericton when close to 24 trucks passed through

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Close to 24 trucks were seen at the Lincoln Big Stop in the afternoon as they were approaching Fredericton, to join a convoy of trucks heading to Ottawa to make drivers' voices heard about COVID-19 mandates. A 10 minute delay in westbound traffic was seen as the convoy was eventually escorted by police, through groups of people standing in the highway. (Mike Heenan/CBC)

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About two dozen trucks left the Lincoln Big Stop near Fredericton on Thursday afternoon, a protest convoy bound for Ottawa to make drivers' voices heard about COVID-19 mandates.

There was a 10-minute delay in westbound traffic on the Trans-Canada Highway as police led the convoy leaders through groups of people standing near the truck stop.

Hundreds of people stood along the highway, holding flags and signs in support of the trucks, whose next stop was to be Edmundston, near the Quebec border.

The convoy had grown from the five trucks spotted leaving the Irving Aulac Big Stop, after arriving in New Brunswick from Nova Scotia on Thursday morning.

The protest convoy from various parts of Canada has been a polarizing move in the Atlantic region, getting disapproval from the executive director of the Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association.

"We don't support it," Jean-Marc Picard said on *Information Morning Fredericton*. "We think there's better ways to get the message across."

He said the trucking association has been at the table with government, fighting for drivers and trucking companies since the pandemic began.

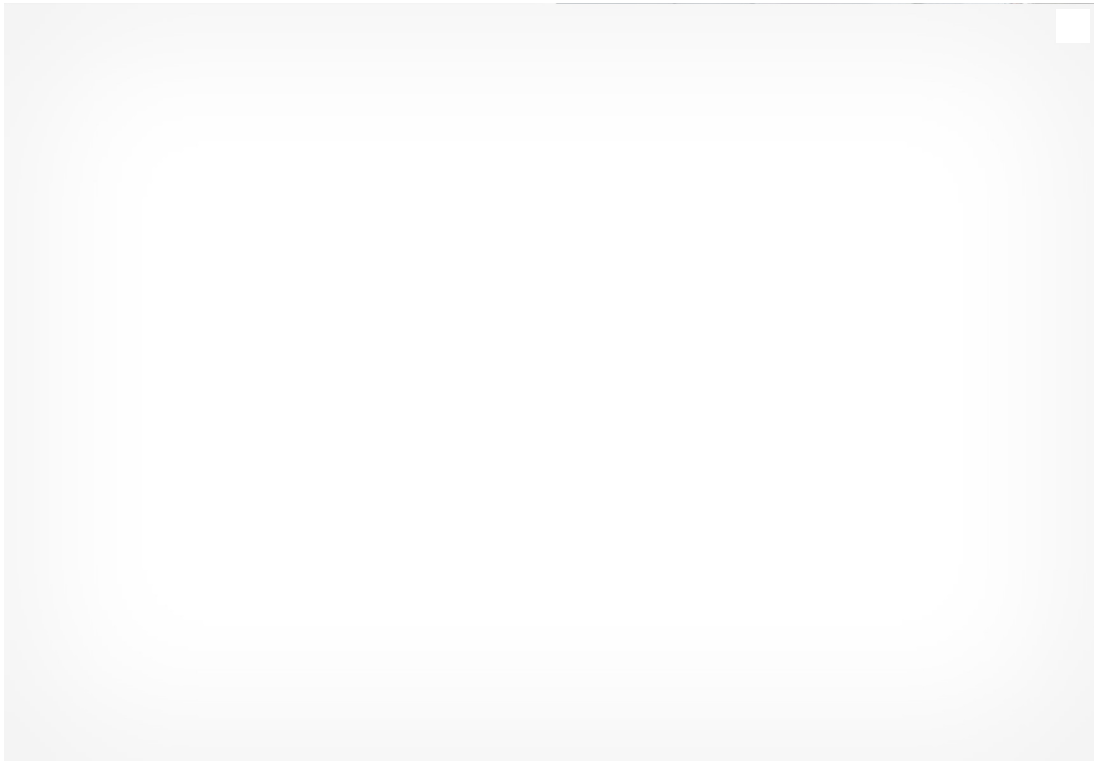




A convoy of trucks headed to Ottawa today to protest pandemic restrictions does not have the support of the Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association. The executive director of the APTA, Jean-Marc Picard, says no good will come of the protest. (CBC)

In Aulac, truckers were greeted by people waving flags and holding signs referring to the "freedom" the convoy is allegedly driving to Ottawa to fight for.

The protest comes amid reports of [empty grocery shelves](#) across Canada, the result of a variety of issues affecting the food supply chain.



Truckers have complained about a vaccination mandate, which took effect on Jan. 15, that requires Canadian cross-border essential workers — including truckers — to show proof of vaccination at a port of entry to avoid stringent testing requirements and quarantine.

Picard said that the association tried to have the mandate reversed before its implementation but was unsuccessful.

"The U.S. has a mandate, too, so even if Canada changed its mind, it's irrelevant. It's a moot point at this stage," said Picard.

In October, the U.S. started requiring all essential international travellers, including truck drivers, who cross land borders to be fully vaccinated.



In Aulac, truckers were greeted with crowds of people waving flags and holding signs referencing the "freedom" the convoy is allegedly driving to Ottawa to fight for. (Mike Heenan/CBC)

"Look at where it's escalated now, the message is lost," said Picard, citing how the truck convoy has attracted multiple groups frustrated with public health measures.

[Other groups and individuals](#) opposed to restrictions and the pressure for vaccination made efforts to join the protest, which has raised security concerns.

"We don't feel it looks good on us and we're an amazing industry and we need to attract people, and we don't feel that it's helping us in any way," said Picard, who is troubled by reports of roadblocks as the truckers converge on Ottawa.

LISTEN: Jean-Marc Picard of the Atlantic Provinces Trucking Association speaks with CBC host Jeanne Armstrong about the trucking convoy

**10:17**

Trucker protest

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Currently, 90 per cent of truckers are vaccinated against COVID-19, but Picard said that is no longer relevant given the direction the trucking convoy has now gone in.

Picard has even received calls from the general public who feel the association should throw its support behind truckers.

But Picard has concerns over the long-term consequences of the convoy.

"The supply chain right now is very fragile, and we're losing people and we have a driver shortage and everyone's going to suffer from this long term if it just continues to escalate."





A 10 minute delay in westbound traffic was seen as the convoy was eventually escorted by police, through groups of people standing in the TransCanada highway. (Mike Heenan/CBC)

With files from Information Morning Fredericton

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